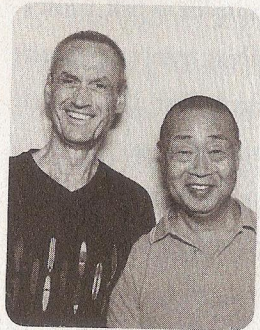


normally don't happen in daily life but sometimes you really crave. About love, about life, about death—things you kind of feel a little frightened by but we felt safe to talk about. We created an immense sense of connection by sharing those really intimate thoughts. And I really feel supported by the legacy of their lives. It keeps you going.



RECORDED IN NEW YORK, NEW YORK,
ON JULY 17, 2015.

Paul Boos (*left*) and Issan Koyama.

IRONWORKER KERRY DAVIS, 52, TALKS WITH HIS COWORKER AND FRIEND KEN HOPPER, 53.

Kerry Davis: We've worked together as ironworkers on the Golden Gate Bridge for twenty-five years. It's a unique job, because there's only a few of us out there. We maintain the actual structure of the bridge, climbing in places where nobody else really goes. We like to say that we do everything "high, heavy, and hard"; we do all the stuff that nobody else wants to do.

Ken Hopper: But it's awesome—we get paid to climb around on the world's biggest jungle gym.

Kerry: We have to be 100 percent safe when we do our thing, because we can't really afford any mistakes. We have no protection for the tourists walking on the sidewalks below us. We drop something and it becomes newsworthy. We don't want that, so we take our time.

As we're working, we check in with each other: "Do you have this? Can I move this now?" We give things back and forth to each other. We've worked together for so long, we finish each other's steps.

Ken: Yeah, after we'd been working together for a while, people literally started calling you Ken, and they'd call me Kerry, because we were together so much.

When we go up we have to wear a full-body harness, and we are tied off at all times. When you start walking up the bridge, it's pretty flat at first, then it'll start angling up, and pretty soon it's kind of steep. You're hanging on to this cable wire, and the steeper it gets, the tighter you hang on.

Kerry: And you go up to the very top of the tower—about five hundred feet. People don't know that that's one of the coldest places on Earth when the wind blows and the fog comes in.

Ken: But being able to go out there and work on the bridge, every so often I have to stop and be a tourist and just look—even to this day—because I see it from a different angle. It'll be a really clear day, and I'll just never have really seen the bridge in that aspect.

Kerry: Right, I do the same thing. The bridge is our corner office, and you just have to stop and take it all in.

I like the freedom of our job: we go out, and there's nobody there to bother you or pressure you. And nobody can hear what we're doing but us.

But I guess at some point we ought to talk about one of the hardest things we have to deal with. . . . People will come out to end their lives. And we see that. It's tough.

Ken: You get to where you can recognize indicators: if they've been in one spot for a long time, if they're out there and it's really cold and they don't have a coat. Or they're by themselves, not really doing the tourist thing and looking at the view. Even crying—that's really a good indicator.

I've gotten to the point where I'll walk up to them, and after a while I'll just flat out say, "Are you thinking about jumping off this bridge today?" And a lot of times that actually gets a reaction where they're shocked that I'm asking, and I've had them truly answer, "Yeah." And then we have to do what we can to get them off the bridge.

Kerry: I had one instance where a guy started talking to me. He was a bartender in San Francisco, and he couldn't find a job. I asked him if I could climb over and talk to him, and he let me get within his space. He was on one side of the suspender cable, and I was on the other side. I grabbed the cable, reached around, and I just latched on to him. And I says, "Man, you know, things may look bad now, but it'll get better." And he actually said thank you—he didn't know what he really wanted to do.

Another time I went out after a girl that looked like she's about the same age as my daughter. She had taken her keys, her shoes, and her socks and had thrown them in the water. She was lying there on the cord, and my coworker climbed over to

her, and I was right there. And as soon as he got close enough to grab her, I jumped over the rail and I grabbed her, too.

It's really hard to see somebody who's that low. Usually we talk amongst ourselves, we kind of debrief along the way: what went right, what went wrong. And you know, that's when we actually let things out.

Ken: There's hardly ever any closure. I mean, you know, we're worried: *Well, what happened to this guy? Is he OK?* There's a lot of unanswered questions.

Kerry: Yeah, and there's a feeling of elation when you finally *do* connect with them in some way. I'd say we've rescued 90 percent of the people that we've gone out after.

Ken: Some have even called us Guardians of the Gate, and that's nice to hear. It feels good.

Kerry: Well, I just want to say that working on the Golden Gate Bridge has been a lifetime achievement; I really do appreciate the time that I've spent there. And to meet people like you, and all the rest of the people that I've been working with—it's more than just a coworker thing; it's been an honor.



RECORDED IN SAN FRANCISCO,
CALIFORNIA, ON JUNE 13, 2009.

Kerry Davis (left) and Ken Hopper.

SANITATION WORKER ANGELO BRUNO, 60, TALKS WITH HIS FORMER PARTNER EDDIE NIEVES, 55.

Angelo Bruno: You have to work in sync when you're picking up the garbage: bend together, lift together. There's some days you and your partner are doing fourteen hours together—more time than with your wife or your girlfriend at home. It's like a marriage.

My old partner had retired, and you seemed like the kind of guy I could work with. So I went over to you one day, and I told you, "Eddie, I'm looking for a new partner. I know I can be a little difficult, because I do have some set ways, but give me a try." You were graceful enough to say, "Sure, why not?" And we hit it off from the beginning.

Eddie Nieves: We might have had maybe one disagreement in